Power, politics and transnational policy-making in education
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This paper analyses the relation between power and politics under the conditions of economic globalisation and transnational policy-making in education. The paper argues that power lies not only with the producers of the dominant educational discourse nor simply with the very discourse which is circulated and reproduced in national legislations, local policies and pedagogic practices; it lies with the increasingly global endorsement of a specific perception of what education should be about: to maintain or increase ‘economic competitiveness’, ‘growth’, ‘development’ and ultimately ‘progress’. Progress remains the central signification of societies today, as the paper argues, and, therefore, the main source of power, namely of widespread consent around a largely common set of education policies promoted across countries.

Keywords: education policy; power; politics; international organisations; progress

Introduction

The promotion of a largely common set of education policies across countries, which in the 1990s was tentatively identified in scholarly analyses (e.g. Ball 1998), is today evident in the activities of major transnational institutions. In Europe, knowledge production, transmission and certification are no longer exclusive affairs of the European nation states, but the issues of a common reform programme shaped by, through and within the EU. This has been apparent since the Maastricht Treaty and the ‘European dimension in education’, but particularly since the ‘Lisbon strategy’, the creation of a ‘European education space’, the (pan-European) ‘Bologna Process’ and the ‘European Framework for Lifelong Learning’. The European states agree through their numerous initiatives and documents produced by the EU over recent years, that they should be focusing ‘on competitiveness, growth and productivity and strengthening social cohesion’ and that they should give ‘strong emphasis on knowledge, innovation and the optimisation of human capital’ (EC 2006, 7). This emphasis now, following the 2008 crisis in the financial markets, is even stronger, as ‘investments in human resources through education training’ are confirmed to be the top priority of the Union’s Member States. Investing in human resources has certainly been the main priority of the OECD since its creation – an organisation comprised now of 31 (mostly wealthy) Member States, with affiliations with tens of other countries and organisations. Through its numerous publications and programmes of performance measurement, the OECD has recently acquired remarkable influence in education policy; currently, the Programme for International Student Assessment, the
famous PISA, is applied to countries accounting for almost 90% of the world economy (Ischinger 2007). The World Bank, comprising 186 states, which are also members of its twin organisation the International Monetary Fund (IMF, whose role and capacity have now been even more strengthened), is today the biggest external loan provider for education programmes. These programmes account for about one quarter of all external financing for education and promote the organisation’s policies across a significant number of borrowing states (at present 90). Either directly, through educational programmes, or indirectly, through ‘structural adjustment programmes’ along with the IMF, the World Bank has been promoting for decades policies of human capital development and ‘economic efficiency’ across the education systems of its Member States. Their pronounced main aims, which could well label also the above institutions’ agenda, are: ‘Quality Learning for All – Skills and Knowledge for Growth and Competitiveness – Education System for Results’. The overall framework for this agenda since the 1980s has been economic neoliberalism, succinctly expressed in the 1990s as the ‘Washington Consensus’ and jointly pursued by the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO (World Trade Organisation) and selected governments. The WTO, now consisting of 150 Member States, has practically entered education policy since 1998, by formally regarding education as a ‘service’ and therefore subject to market liberalisation under the ‘General Agreement on Trade and Services’ (GATS) (see WTO 1998 and Robertson 2003).

Evidently, the above transnational institutions, networked with other national and international agencies and organisations, in spite of differences and variations amongst them and despite the degree of their success in individual countries, have been promoting worldwide over recent decades a set of education policies which bring education systems into the service of the global economy. Dale (2000) called these policies a ‘Globally Structured Educational Agenda’ (GSEA), which reflects the impact of globalised capitalism on education systems, a thesis that he distinguished from the one attributing such policies to a ‘Common World Educational Culture’ (CWEC) – a set of western/universalistic norms, structures, and contents which have spread across countries since the nineteenth century (see for example Meyer, Kamens and Benavot 1992). GSEA, as Dale underlined, indicates the existence of a transnational space of education policy which is associated with economic globalisation.

Indeed, it is important to note that this space is not *inter-national*, in the traditional sense, as major policies are no longer made in the context of clearly distinguished relations between nation states; nor is it *supra-national*, as policies are not made above or beyond nation states. It is a *trans-national* space, instituted and sustained by nation states, international organisations, inter-state entities and global corporations, and in which policies and discourses cross borders and flow in and out of the nation states’ arenas of power (see Sklair 2001; Beck 2005).

This paper attempts an analysis of the relation between power and education policy under the conditions of economic globalisation. There will be no description of the education policies of international organisations (IOs) and other transnational entities (i.e., the EU), which can be found in other relevant sources (see for example Novoa and Lawn 2002; Martens et al. 2007; Moutsios 2007, 2009). The concern of this paper is to reconsider theoretically education policy under the contemporary transnational policy-making regime, a task which requires first and foremost the clarification of our terminology. What is education politics and what is policy-making – two concepts hardly distinguished in the literature – and what is exactly being transnationalised? What makes the production-related education policies global in their
reach? There is a need to re-examine the meaning of power as well as its operation in the construction and promotion of a common set of education policies on a global scale. A discussion of politics, policy-making and power in education will be the task of the first two sections of the article, while the third and final section will proceed to elaborate on the article’s main argument. The paper suggests that power in education policy lies in a transnational space of economic and political rule; in more fundamental terms, though, power lies, as it will be argued, in the increasingly global acceptance of a specific perception of what education should be about: to maintain or increase ‘economic competitiveness’ or ‘growth’ or ‘development’ or, ultimately, ‘progress’. Progress, understood since the establishment of the nation state mainly as the unlimited accumulation of scientific and technological knowledge and increase of production and consumption capacity, continues, despite its transformations, to be a guiding idea and thus a source of widespread consent for policy-making across societies and education systems. What we see under globalisation, the paper argues, is that social progress, identified more than ever before with economic competitiveness, is becoming a global policy-making project, managed, coordinated and measured through/by transnational institutions.

Politics and policy-making in education

In many European languages politics and policy-making are expressed with the same term, an adoption of the Greek word πολιτική (e.g., German: politik and French: politique), whose meaning, however, is different. The English terminological distinction is helpful to underline this difference and emphasise that in spite of their alternate usage in everyday life, politics should not be confounded with policy-making.

Politics is commonly perceived as the actions of rulers, parliaments, ministers, politicians and political parties, as well as those who help them to take office (see Minogue 2005). Politics is also understood as negotiating or lobbying with power holders or as the management of interest groups by politicians prior to the introduction of governmental decisions. In its vulgarised perception – today in fact the most common – politics is regarded as demagoguery, intrigues, manipulation of public opinion, or ‘information management’ through the media. But politics in its original sense is far different and far more fundamental than its common perception allows: it refers to the participation of citizens in public activities aimed at dialogue, critique, and deliberation on existing or new policies. In her classical essay Was ist Politik Hanna Arendt (2005) underlines that politics is concerned with everything that ensures the existence of freedom and that freedom can exist only in the space of politics. Politics, as Arendt stresses, should not be connected with violence (i.e., Weber’s and Clausewitz’s argument); violence and war are anti-political in the sense that they collapse the space of debate and persuasion, since they are waged with command and obedience. Politics requires a space of logos, of unconstrained, argumentative speech or, in Habermas’ (1986) terms, a space of communicative rationality, based on the mutual recognition of criticisable validity claims. In its fundamental sense, elaborated by Cornelius Castoriadis (1991), politics refers to the conscious, critical, self-critical, and rational activity which is concerned with the institution of society. In other words, politics is the activity which sets into question the directions, projects, laws and institutions of a society; by doing so it unleashes the creativity of citizens and enables them to formulate new projects and work for their actualisation. In this regard, we can define as education politics the explicit
activity of citizens – parents, teachers/academics and students – to set into question, reflect and deliberate on the purpose, the contents and the pedagogic mode of learning and, if considered necessary, to alter them accordingly.

The difference between politics and policy-making can be well illustrated by reference to the Platonic dialogues dealing with the question of the relation between knowledge and political opinion in the democratic *polis*. In a democracy where citizens are expected to formulate and express their opinions, there must be a clear distinction between political opinion and professional expertise, as it is stressed in *Protagoras*. Protagoras and Socrates agree that when it is to take decisions about affairs of the polis, everybody can express their opinion. Technical, specialised knowledge is needed when it comes to specific tasks and it is then that experts are summoned to give advice or materialise the decisions taken in the political process. Expertise, therefore, must be distinguished from political opinion, which is essential for politics to take place. In his *Republic*, but particularly in *The statesman*, Plato, in opposition to Protagoras and the Athenian democracy, proclaimed politics as *episteme* and considered supreme the political regime in which the rulers are wise men who possess the right knowledge and therefore the right way to govern. Since politics is episteme, it cannot be available to the many but only to those few who possess the knowledge and the skill to suggest the appropriate solution to a specific problem – as a doctor knows the right medicine for every illness. This fundamental perception gave rise to the western tradition of *political science* and consequently to policy-making as an activity based on specialisation and expertise. 9

In this regard, policy-making is an activity which takes place away from politics. Policy-making assumes authorised decision-makers and specialised expertise; it is thus a hierarchical and instrumental process. Policy-making sets an agenda, determines goals, uses data, chooses courses of implementation, evaluates results and modifies initial goals (see Colebatch 2002). It is a goal-orientated, feedback-controlled, problem-solving and ‘evidence-based’ approach. To put it in Habermas’ (1986) terms, policy-making is a process of *instrumental rationality*. However, despite the fact the policy-making appears as purely technical and thus neutral, in reality it is based on political opinion. Political opinion though is taken for granted, or it is obscured amidst specialised data and procedures of planning and implementation. In this sense, *education policy-making* should be considered a hierarchical, expert-driven and goal-oriented process of decision-making which is based on a taken-for-granted or implicit political opinion about the purpose, the content and the pedagogic mode of learning.

In modernity, the making of policies in education has been an affair of the state, especially of its bureaucracies. Indeed, bureaucracy, as the central organisation mode of the modern nation state, became the main context of policy-making, implementation and control. Modern bureaucracies, according to Weber’s (1947) classical analyses, are ‘rational–legal’ authorities characterised by hierarchy, impersonality, continuity and expertise. Expertise, their capacity to organise information and use specialised knowledge, is a feature of bureaucracies, particularly emphasised by Weber:

> Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge. This is the feature of it which makes it specifically rational. This consists on the one hand in technical knowledge which, by itself, is sufficient to ensure it a position of extraordinary power… Bureaucracy is superior in knowledge, including both technical knowledge and knowledge of the concrete fact within its own sphere of interest…
> (Weber 1947, 339)
In the twentieth century, the increased potential of bureaucracies to mobilise information and knowledge recourses has enhanced their role and placed them practically at the core of policy-making (see Gryski 1981). Education policy has certainly not been an exception; ministries, directorates, inspectorates, governmental and quasi-governmental bodies, statistical services, and evaluation agencies have been and are the main mechanisms of education policy-making. Since the end of the twentieth century, in many countries (e.g., in North America and Europe), education policies and practices have fallen into the joined function of bureaucracy (as ‘management’) and the market, the result being the establishment of local and national mechanisms of performance control. The so-called new public management creates a mechanism of objective-based and outcome-driven surveillance over educational institutions, coordinated by central and local bureaucracies which measure performances and reward or castigate.

What is more remarkable today is that the making of policies in education and various other domains is intensively based on objectives and data produced not only by nation state bureaucracies; they are produced increasingly by international organisations and inter-state political entities (i.e., the EU) and they are widely used for policies introduced at the nation state level. As Barnett and Finnemore (2004) remind us, in a seminal study on the role of international organisations (IOs) in policy-making around the world, IOs are bureaucracies too. They are created by states and as such they appear rational, impartial and technical. They are characterised by the attributes of bureaucratic authority, suggested in the Weberian analysis: rational–legal, delegated, moral and expert. This makes international organisations authoritative in policy-making, as the authors point out, in two main ways: they are ‘in authority’ and at the same time they are ‘an authority’ (25). They are ‘in authority’ because they have the role that national societies recognise as legitimate for them to exercise power; and they are ‘an authority’ because they handle data and demonstrate expertise. Thus, they are valued as superior and neutral agencies of policy formulation:

Bureaucracy is powerful and commands deference, not in its own right, but because of the values it claims to embody and the people it claims to serve. IOs cannot simply say, ‘we are bureaucracies; do what we say’. To be authoritative, ergo powerful, they must be seen to serve some valued and legitimate social purpose, and, further, they must be seen to serve that purpose in an impartial and technocratic way using their impersonal rules. The authority of IOs, and bureaucracies generally, therefore, lies in their ability to present themselves as impersonal and neutral – as not exercising power but instead serving the others. (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 21)

To appear neutral and impartial, transnational institutions, albeit different in their function, rely heavily on specialist knowledge, as it supports scientifically political pursuits and indicates ‘solutions’ to pre-defined ‘problems’. The OECD, for example, is an IO organised in directorates, departments and centres, committees, working groups and expert groups, and it is comprised of networks of specialists, consultants, researchers and policy analysts, which produce more than 250 publications a year (books, reports, working papers and statistical data), about practically all policy domains. In education the OECD produces ‘national reports’ for its ‘clients’ and ‘thematic analyses’ about most educational issues (e.g., school management, higher education, adult education, lifelong learning and even early childhood education) and conducts well-known programmes of comparison of educational attainment. The World Bank, as another example, is a huge bureaucratic organisation with more than
11,300 staff, amongst which work hundreds of economists, financial analysts and technical specialists, hierarchically structured with boards of executive directors, a president and vice presidents, 150 directors, project officers, tasks managers, etc. The ‘Bank’ is organised in sector-based divisions and technical departments, according to continents and regions, country programmes and project operations, and gives more than $20 billion each year in ‘development loans’ to its ‘clients’ (many of whom have made a good deal of personal benefit, according to the organisation’s long record of cooperation with corrupt and totalitarian regimes – see Berkman 2008; Weaver 2008). In the EU, education policy-making takes place through the Commission directorates and services, various agencies and networks (e.g., CEDEFOP, ETF, CRELL, EENEE and NESSE),\(^\text{11}\) and through mechanisms such as the open method of coordination (OMC), which engage state members in the mutual pursuit of policy goals by means of fixed guidelines, timetables, indicators and benchmarks, targets, performance comparisons, monitoring, peer review and diffusion of ‘best practices’ (Dale 2006; Moutsios 2007). Overall, transnational bureaucracies produce or sponsor academic research networks or private consultancy companies to produce indicators, recommendations, consultation documents, evaluation results, progress reports, etc.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may also be part of transnational policy-making. The usual argument that NGOs are the actors of a ‘global civil society’ (Castells 2008; Sassen 2007; Beck 2005) needs to be qualified: there are more than 40,000 NGOs operating in the world and they are distinguished by a great variety of types (lobby groups, professional associations, research institutes, charities, advocacy organisations, etc.) (Leverty 2009). Many major NGOs operate with the same problem-solving pattern as managerial bureaucracies (they undertake externally funded projects, carry out ‘stocktaking reviews’, define inputs and outputs, lobby with ‘stakeholders’, monitor their results, etc.).\(^\text{12}\) Moreover, many NGOs depend on funding by the state, IOs and donor agencies, with which they may well cooperate in policy-making projects.\(^\text{13}\)

The prevalence of policy-making at both national and transnational levels, through managerial bureaucracies, should be seen in conjunction with economic globalisation, which de-democratises decision-making processes, as a number of studies have remarked (see Touraine 1997; Castells 2004; Beck 2005; Held 2006; see also Moutsios 2008). Indeed, globalisation entails that important decisions for societies are taken within transnational economic and political networks rather than by national or local institutions of representation and certainly not by their citizens. The making of major policies becomes an affair of what Castells (2004) calls the ‘network state’ (comprised by governments, inter-state entities, IOs and NGOs), whose function is asymmetrical in terms of power distribution, and which is dominated by global markets. It is a space which devises and promotes legal norms, regulations and collectively binding decisions within the policy arena of the nation state, whose monopoly in the production of law, as Beck notes (2005, 72), is thus broken. As a consequence, a new legal regime emerges, which Beck calls translegal. School reforms in many countries through national legislation which is triggered by the results of PISA (e.g., Germany or Denmark) or changes in national legislation as a result of the Bologna process are characteristic cases. Other examples of translegal regimes in education policy can be the marketisation of educational provision on the basis of the World Bank’s loan programmes (see Alexander 2001) or the WTO’s trade agreements in ‘education services’ (see Rikowski, G. 2002/3).
The role of global business is of major importance in Beck’s formulation. Obviously, with good reason; global capital has increased enormously its power during the last decades: out of 166 entities (countries and companies) with GDP or sales of more than $50 billion in 2008, only 60 were countries while 106 were companies (see Rothkopf 2008, 33). The capacities of global businesses to be independent of territorial boundaries in their search for profit but also to have their strategies carried through by nation states and their citizens have granted them what Beck (op. cit.) calls ‘economic sovereignty’. The result is that the, ‘transnational quasi-state foundations of global politics are being shaped by the sovereignty of private business according to the principles of economic rationality’ (144). This ‘quasi-state’, as Beck notes, is a space devoid of politics where decisions are taken away from the public:

This represents the first ever manifestation of a (quasi-) state without territory, whose power impacts upon existing territorial states from the outside, but which also creates a new political space beyond their borders. This is an utterly unpolitical state, a state without public sphere, indeed a quasi-state without society, located in a ‘non-place’, pursuing ‘non-policies’ which it uses to restrict the power of national societies and to break them up from the inside. (Beck 2005, 146–7)

Indeed, it is an un-political decision-making regime but, certainly, not in the sense that what is missing is the political, that is the existence of authority and the exercise of power. What is missing is politics as a public activity of critique of and deliberation on the directions and laws of societies. This is a state of affairs which is compatible with the domestic political arenas of many countries, certainly the EU members (see Moutsios 2007), where economic growth and competitiveness have become, over recent years, the main political problem – both before and after the financial crisis. The general concurrence across the political spectrum on prioritising national performance in the global economy, removes largely the ground for substantial political debate amongst citizens. Politics then is being eliminated by the dominance of policy-making, exercised through national, and increasingly transnational bureaucracies and steering mechanisms of objective setting and performance measurement. As a consequence, education politics as the activity of teachers/academics, learners and parents to question and reflect on the purpose, the contents and the pedagogic mode of learning, is superseded by transnational policy-making, which aims primarily at generating the cognitive and human resources required by the labour markets.

**Power and transnational education reform**

Where does power lie, under the conditions of globalisation, and in particular with regard to education policy? The above remarks indicate already the argument of this paper: power is located in the strategies and decisions of policy-making elites, which act in the transnational space constituted by global business, states, international organisations and interstate entities – an argument which would be in accord with a number of well known studies on economic globalisation (see Rothkopf 2008; Klein 2007; Sassen 2007; Harvey 2005; Beck 2005; Sklair 2001). Rothkopf (2008), for instance, speaks about the emergence of a global ‘superclass’, Sassen (2007) refers to a transnational elite, and Sklair (2001, 17) talks about the constitution of a transnational capitalist class (TCC), which owns and controls the major means of production,
distribution and exchange through various forms of capital (i.e., economic, political, organisational, cultural and knowledge capital). According to Sklair, the TCC includes executives of transnational corporations and their local affiliates, globalising politicians, bureaucrats, professionals, merchants and media. Despite differences in terminology, it is evident that economic and political power is now exercised across national borders, where global business, states and transnational institutions interact to produce polices, including education policies.

In fact education is of particular interest for transnational policy-making because of the significance that knowledge has for the global economy. As Carnoy and Castells (1999) rightly pointed out, Poulantza’s thesis, that the state controls the generation and use of knowledge to reproduce power relations in a capitalist society, no longer holds: because of economic globalisation and the widespread use of information technologies, global markets, rather than the nation state, exert control over the production of knowledge as well as its transmission to national societies. States, as the authors argue, use their remaining control to promote, through their education policies, an ideology which values the acquisition of productive skills as a high priority. To have access to and control over knowledge as well as over the human resources of national societies, global capital, as Beck writes (2005, 121–65), employs a range of strategies. For example, with its ‘autarchic strategies’ capital tries to minimise its dependency on individual states by rendering them easily replaceable and interchangeable, depending on whether they fulfil investment criteria; with its ‘substitution strategies’ capital places states in a process of competition by comparing them on the basis of a unitary norm in order to make them streamlined for investments; and with its ‘innovation strategies’ capital acquires systematic access to the cognitive possibilities of national societies – namely access to the innovatory power of science and technology – in order to devise new production methods and new products.

Hence, the promotion of reforms across countries which standardise education provision and knowledge generation: they are intended to produce human and cognitive resources relevant to global business and to increase competition between states and therefore the range of options available for investors to choose from. Nation states agree to carry out a policy agenda purported to make education systems more performative and more competitive, through their participation in transnational institutions. There are certainly tremendously unequal power relations in the ‘network’: some ‘nodes’ are more powerful than others and thus able (e.g., through funding, differential voting rights in IOs, expertise, political or business pressures, etc.) to have their own goals adopted by all ‘nodes’. However, it is the nation states and their political authorities which accede to take part in the global production system and in policy-making institutions and which adhere to the rules and power relations of these institutions.

Transnational institutions and their bureaucracies play, no doubt, a crucial role; Beck (2005) calls them the ‘midwives’ of global markets, as they undertake to turn national states and societies into instruments of capital flows and production–consumption cycles. Indeed, transnational institutions call on education systems to create the most ‘competitive knowledge-based economy in the world’ (EU), to present high scores in production-related subjects and skills (OECD), to focus on human capital production (World Bank) or to become ‘educational services’ opened up to foreign investments (WTO). For example, the World Bank, which since the late 1990s has baptised itself as the ‘Knowledge Bank’, set out with its ‘Knowledge for Development’ Programme (K4D) to measure the progress of its Member States in being/becoming ‘knowledge-based economies’ (KBE). In the organisation’s words the programme:
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'helps clients assess how they compare with others in their ability to compete in the knowledge economy' (World Bank 2007, 3). At the core of this programme is the so-called knowledge assessment methodology (KAM) which ranks 140 countries on the basis of 83 indicators distributed in four 'pillars' purported to measure each country's performance as a 'knowledge-based economy' (World Bank 2008; see also Robertson 2008). Moreover, the OECD formally proposes that all types and phases of education should serve the rise of productivity (OECD 2006a) through organisational, curricular and pedagogic reforms and through the elimination of boundaries between vocational and general education and between education and work (OECD 2007a). In fact, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and PISA were initiated by the OECD as tools for measuring human capital (OECD 2001, 19), an aim which is further pursued through the recently launched AHELO programme (Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes), a kind of 'PISA for higher education' (OECD 2009). Entire education systems, with deep roots in the history of their societies, are regarded, for the first time so explicitly and so widely, as means to ends defined by the global production system. Through the international performance measurements this instrumental logic is applied to a variety of social and educational characteristics: socio-economic and national background of students, gender differences, administration of schools, parental participation, pedagogic methods, etc., are all treated as means to the ultimate end of raising scores in selected subjects. Societies, education systems and pedagogic arrangements are scanned, by the 'evidence-based' policy-making of IOs, to identify performing 'knowledge-based economies' and 'best practices' for the production of human capital.

Thus, power in contemporary education policy lies in the interaction between global capital, states and transnational institutions and the strategies, arrangements and decisions of their policy-making elites who are able to mobilise economic, institutional and discursive resources to realise their agendas. Scholars who still see education policy as a national affair would be, perhaps, unfamiliar with this thesis, but certainly not those in globalisation studies who maintain that the nation state is disempowered in terms of its sovereignty and policy-making capacity (see Castells 2004; Beck 2005).

However, what both ethnocentric and globalisation approaches usually overlook, and in general what policy studies neglect, is that to understand power in its relation to politics one needs to bear in mind their collective dimension; that is, that the exercise of power is impossible without a degree of consent yielded to decisions and policies. Talcott Parsons, from the point of view of his structural–functional theory, realised this when he remarked that: 'The problem of control of political power is above all the problem of integration, of building the power of individuals and sub-collectivities into a coherent system of legitimised authority where power is fused into collective responsibility' (Parsons 1951, 127). A more extensive understanding of the collective dimension of power and its reliance on social consensus is given by Hanna Arendt (1969). Arendt questioned all traditional definitions which identified power with violence: Weber's well-known argument that the state's power over people is based on the means of legitimate violence; Marx's thesis that the state is an instrument of repression in the hands of the bourgeoisie; Wright Mills' perception of politics as a fight for violence and his understanding of violence as the supreme form of power; and Mao Zedong's popular dictum that power grows out of the barrel of a gun. Arendt notes that power should be distinguished from strength (an individual property), authority (recognition of one's view or decision as correct), force (energy
stemming from physical or social moves) or violence. She agrees that power and violence usually appear together, but, as she indicates, in reality, they are separate phenomena. Power, as Arendt remarks, is the ability of humans to act and to act with others and in this respect it does not belong to a single person but to a group. Power arises wherever people actconcertedly, and their concerted actions take place in the political arena. In other words, power exists where there is a public sphere constituted by acting and speaking individuals – a political community where there is free contestation of opinions. Violence, as Arendt stresses, is instrumental – it seeks to be effective with regard to the goal which justifies it – and anti-political: it appears when and where speech based on rational argumentation ceases to be exercised; that is, when and where power is lost. The perception of power as collective action entails that political institutions express and materialise the power granted to them by the people; in other words, expressions such as ‘he holds the power’ or ‘they are in power’, as Arendt notes, indicate acceptance and support by a number of people. In modernity though, the emergence and dominance of bureaucracy in governance bring about a new complex system of authority where neither a single person, nor a few, nor the many can be held responsible and to account for their practices. Modern bureaucracy is the ‘rule by nobody’, as Arendt notes, where there is no ruler to be identified, where individual components are powerless, but whose power can be overwhelming. In line with Arendt, but with reference to Weber, Barnett and Finnemore (2004, 165) underline that bureaucratic authority is ‘authority legitimated’, that is, bureaucracies, including those of transnational institutions, exercise their power on the basis of consent.

If political power is a collective responsibility, then policy-making, as it was defined above, entails that power is ceded to actors and institutions that decide on behalf of – or instead of – citizens. The increasing bureaucratisation of decision-making within the nation state over recent decades signifies this condition, which has been substantially reinforced by the emergence and expansion of transnational elites and institutions under globalisation. In this regard, it is the disempowerment of citizens that transnational policy-making manifests rather than the disempowerment of the state – which, after all, is always supposed to wither, but always ‘returns’, either to combat terrorism (Castells 2004, 340) or to ‘bail out’ the financial markets.

The collective dimension of political power has also been neglected by education policy studies which, since the early 1990s, have directed research attention to policy discourse formation, largely due to influence by Foucauldian accounts. Foucault, famously, sought to ‘cut off the head of the king’, that is, to move the analytical light away from the ‘supreme power’ and throw it instead on the multiple forms of subjection existing in the social organism – the final destinations of power and its discursive practices in constituting individuals (Foucault 1986). Power, as Foucault underlined, cannot be established without the production, accumulation, circulation and operation of a discourse. In education studies, Ball’s work is well-known (see 1990, 1994) to raise the importance of education policy discourses (e.g., ‘performance’, ‘choice’, ‘management’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘competitiveness’, etc.) in constructing truth claims, possibilities of thought and meaning. Moreover, the emergence, classification, and distribution of educational discourses on the basis of power relations are core elements in Bernstein’s theory. In his conceptualisation of ‘pedagogic discourse’, Bernstein (2000) distinguishes an ‘instructional discourse’ and a ‘regulative discourse’; the former, a discourse of skills, is embedded in the regulative discourse, which is the dominant discourse, as it defines criteria and rules of social order.
Nevertheless, despite the recognition that educational discourses derive from broader social, economic and political power relations and discourses, and in spite of the acknowledgement that discourses embody meaning, much of discourse theorisation pays inadequate attention to the link between meaning and power. Indeed, discourses are discourses precisely because they convey meaning. They indicate what is worth and what is not worth, what is valued and what is not valued. At the level of the social, meaning refers to significations – social imaginary significations in Castoriadis’s (1991) terms. Every society, as Castoriadis writes, constructs a representation of itself and of other societies, in the past and in the present. To understand the particularity of a period one has to understand the imaginary significations created by a society that dominate its institutions. Social significations are imaginary because they do not derive from natural laws or rational syllogisms, but they are created or discovered by societies; however, they are real factors which indicate the activities, the projects and ultimately the history of a society. By extension, individuals become social individuals because they internalise the imaginary significations incarnated in social institutions; ways of thinking, rules, values, and their very identities as social beings, depend on this internalisation. In short, social imaginary significations convey representations, affects and intentions; they point towards certain directions that societies should take, they socialise individuals through norms and values, and they give them meaning and identity. But, first and foremost, they exist because language communicates them; that is, they are conveyed by discourses.

Power in this respect is established not simply because individuals speak the dominant (‘regulative’) discourse but because they internalise the meaning it embodies. In other words, power, at a fundamental level, lies in the adherence by societies or large segments of their population to the dominant social significations. The analytical attention, therefore, in investigating power and policy should not be limited to the economic, institutional and discursive resources employed by policy-makers. Parsons, here too, was apparently aware of that, when he remarked that power: ‘is based on the existence and use of institutionalised opportunities to exert influence… [and through these opportunities] the system of power is furnished with consensus in the context of social values’ (Parsons 1970). However, we have hardly seen, at least in education policy studies, a theoretical exploration of the relation between power and social values. No doubt, the strategies, decisions, and arrangements of policy-making actors and institutions are very important manifestations of power. These would be, in Castoriadis’ (1991) terms, expressions of explicit power – the capacity of an authority to bring someone to do or abstain from doing something, on the basis of sanctionable injunctions. Nevertheless, at the root of explicit power, and therefore at the root of the consent granted to a decision-making authority, lie the imaginary significations dominating in the society.

The above theoretical remarks have further implications whose pursuit, however, does not belong to the aims of this paper. Nor does this paper purport to discuss the consequences of these remarks in the study of education policy at the national level or even the re-contextualisation of any transnational institution’s policies in any specific country. The paper proposes an analytical perspective, in an effort to understand the formulation of a largely common set of education policies worldwide. In this regard, the point that needs to be made here on the basis of the above theoretical remarks, is that power in education policy is located not only in the decision-making authority of transnational elites and institutions, nor simply in the very discourse which is circulated and reproduced in national legislations, local policies
and pedagogic practices; it lies fundamentally in the widespread, increasingly global, endorsement of a specific perception of what purpose national education systems should be serving or where they should be heading. It is argued here that ‘progress’ (as ‘development’ or ‘growth’ or ‘competitiveness’) is a main global imaginary signification today and therefore the main source of power, namely of widespread consent around a set of transnational policies, including education policies. The next section discusses the origins and the trajectory of the idea of progress as well as its resonance to contemporary transnational policy-making.

Education and the progress of societies

Progress, as an idea and a social and political project, is historically neither new nor too old. As Arendt (1969) remarks, the perception that there is progress in mankind was unknown before the seventeenth century; it was formulated by European literati during the seventeenth century and particularly during the eighteenth century and became a widespread doctrine from the nineteenth century onwards. Indeed, Enlightenment thinkers (most notably Descartes, Leibniz and Condorcet) envisioned mankind as progressing against superstition and tyranny with the use of Reason and with human domination over the forces of nature. According to Arendt, a distinction should be made between earlier and later notions of social progress; whereas in the seventeenth century progress was understood as perpetual accumulation of knowledge, in the eighteenth century it was conceived as the ‘education of mankind’, which should be brought to maturity. From the nineteenth century social progress takes the meaning of an unlimited movement, for which there is neither a starting point nor an end. Progress, as Arendt put it, is now understood as a course of increasing what ‘we have already into something better and higher’ (1969, 27). Castoriadis (1991) agrees that the idea of progress is located in Enlightenment philosophy but he adds that it coincided with the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie and the creation and expansion of industrialism. The result of this mixture was the understanding of progress as unlimited accumulation of knowledge and particularly as unlimited increase of production and productive forces – an imaginary signification which characterised both capitalism and communism. Indeed, in the communist regimes of the twentieth century the main priorities were to increase economic productivity as well as the state’s surveillance and military capacity. In capitalism, where the market economy became the epicentre of social life, the notion of progress would also include the pursuit of economic competitiveness and high levels of consumption. A progressing society came to be understood as a nation state, pursuing economic ‘growth’ or ‘development’, by enhancing continuously its scientific and technological capacity – otherwise it is considered ‘under-developed’, ‘less developed’, ‘least developed’, etc. In short, progress is a construction of Western modernity, conceived as a move of societies towards increasing knowledge, wealth and domination over nature but also over other humans.

What the consequences of this idea could be on societies had become a matter of concern already in the early twentieth century. Henri Bergson famously devoted much of his Nobel Prize speech in 1927 to remarking that the fast technological progress of the time did not entail a rise of ‘the moral level of mankind’ and that it would ‘present dangers unless it is accompanied by a corresponding spiritual effort’ (Bergson 1927). In a more detailed overview, the economist Albert Hirschman disputes the dictum ‘all good things go together’, in the sense that economic progress
begets political progress and vice versa. In examining some historical examples he concludes that political and economic progress are not necessarily tied together. However, what is not considered in these critiques is whether there can really be progress in the domains of ethics and politics. John Gray (2004), the British political philosopher, remarks that whereas progress in science is a fact, in ethics and politics it is a superstition. He accepts that the core idea of progress is the belief that human life becomes better with the growth of knowledge. Nevertheless, he maintains that this applies to science and technology, but not to ethics nor to politics, which are not activities in which what is learned in one generation can be passed on to future generations.

The idea of progress which has been so much celebrated since the eighteenth century became an object of severe critique, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century – a century of two world wars, genocides, totalitarian regimes, extreme poverty and unprecedented environmental degradation. ‘What none of the thinkers of the Enlightenment envisaged, and their followers today have failed to perceive’, writes John Gray (2004, 4), ‘is that human life can become more savage and irrational even as scientific advance accelerates’. The same critique was made in the 1980s and 1990s by postmodernist scholars who regarded progress as one of the ‘grant narratives’ of modernity, which extolled Reason and scientific knowledge applied to the conduct of human affairs, but which, given the historical experience, has come to be discredited (see Usher and Edwards 1994). The argument that ‘the myth of progress’ is discredited or has come to a crisis has been, in fact, common amongst many critics (including Castoriadis), who perhaps were rushed in their predictions. One may see such predictions repeated, following the consequences of the 2008 economic crisis and in the face of large-scale ecosystem collapse. However, what the economic crisis seems to be inducing is a reorganisation of global capitalism through a more multi-polar transnational structure and along ‘post-Washington consensus’ lines purported to withhold the speculative excesses of neoliberalism. Similarly, the detainment of pollution excesses seems to be the main response to dramatic environmental degradation along with the promise of ‘green’ technologies and industries. Nevertheless, progress continues to be a central imaginary signification across societies and across the political–ideological spectrum, while the critiques towards the meaning and the implications of this idea remain rather marginal, even ambivalent. This is reflected in the work of another thinker, the French historian and philosopher Pierre-André Taguieff (2001), who on the one hand argues that the idea of progress has come to an end but on the other sees its resurrection under neoliberal globalisation. In particular, he argues that progress, as expressed in the contemporary discourse (‘reform’, ‘performance’, ‘flexibility’, ‘modernisation’, ‘restructuring’, etc.), has now been transformed to a blind move forward, a perpetual movement for the sake of movement, which he calls mobilisme, and a continuous quest for and adornment of the new (a neophilie). Progress today, the author remarks, includes a minimalist perception of democracy, which, however, is overwhelmed by the ideology of mobilisme, a resurrection of progress, empty of meaning other than business-making. Still though, the core characteristics of the perception of progress (unlimited movement and accumulation of knowledge and wealth) are present, while liberal democracy, part of the discourse indeed, is not always considered either a necessary or a sufficient condition to have a country regarded as being on the pathway of progress (e.g. China today) – perhaps this is why the discourse is shifting now to ‘good governance’. In reality, despite differences in emphases and vocabulary,
productivity, consumption and scientific and technological achievements are still the main attributes of a progressing ‘knowledge society’.

What is worth the analytical attention with regard to progress today, is that it is no longer an abstract idea about where societies should be moving to, but it has taken the form of a *global policy-making project*, managed, coordinated and measured through/ by transnational institutions. There are numerous examples which show this, a few of which have been mentioned above, with reference to IOs and their comparative assessments of educational performances. A very characteristic and recent example is the so-called Istanbul Declaration ‘Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies’, issued in 2007 by major transnational institutions such as the OECD, the EU, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the UN, the UNDP and the World Bank (OECD 2007b). In the declaration it is stressed (ibid., 1) that a ‘culture of evidence-based decision-making has to be promoted at all levels’ to increase the progress of societies. The leading organisation in this is the OECD which is coordinating the so-called ‘Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies’, with participants from over 130 countries, aiming at building ‘a world progress monitoring system’. More recently, the EU launched its own initiative to measure social progress, moving ‘beyond’ the traditional measurements of GDP, which is considered an important but inadequate indicator (see EC 2009). On the same ground, the French government created a much celebrated international commission (the ‘Sarcozy Committee’), chaired by Joseph Stiglitz, to produce indicators of social progress, bringing together measurements conducted by major IOs (see their report, Stiglitz et al. 2009).

The notion of progress is thus both globalised and subject to ‘evidence-based’ policy-making led by transnational institutions; it can be defined in detail through indicators and benchmarks, it can be measured, and societies can be compared in accordance to their degree of achieving it (from GDP, foreign direct investments and investments on R&D and ICT, to access to the Internet, purchase of DVDs, obesity, divorce rates, life expectancy, leisure, ‘civic engagement’, happiness and whatever else transnational policy-making institutions can think of). Progress is remarkably standardised across the world as a set of quantities that must be reduced or increased accordingly. Quantification in this regard is both a way of understanding human progress and, consequently, a methodological approach to identifying it. As a consequence, progress is largely perceived as a move along a linear axis of descending or ascending numerical values with no defined end.

The same applies of course to education, which is considered central to the progress of societies and thus it is measured and compared internationally and will obviously continue to be so more intensively in the years to come. Pursuing progress in education means, for example, pursuing higher performance scores in science and technology, more students entering higher education, more scientific researchers, more job-related adult learning, more externally funded research, more international mobility, more academic publications, etc. The more the better; the maximum is the optimum. The ‘evidence-based’ educational policy of transnational institutions is fully penetrated by the logic of quantification which defines their perception of progress in education.

Progress is about accumulation, growth or increase and the attempts of transnational institutions to ‘broaden’ the concept, in order to include ‘immaterial’, ‘cultural’ or ‘spiritual’ factors, entail nothing but the expansion of quantification to aspects of life which have nothing to do with progress. Indeed, progress cannot be conceived outside of the techno-scientific domain and particularly outside of the domains of
technical improvements, quantities, and standards setting. There can be for example no progress in the affective and cultural domains and, as Weber pointed out in his *Methodology of the social sciences* (1949), empirical inquiry has nothing to say about this, let alone to measure it. Cultural creations, aesthetic evaluations, or inwardness cannot be subject to progress. Progress refers to the instrumental domain, where the solutions to technical problems are sought and where the relation between means and ends is calculated. As Weber put it:

The use of the term ‘progress’ is legitimate in our disciplines when it refers to ‘technical’ problems, i.e., to the ‘means’ of attaining an unambiguously given end. It can never elevate itself into the sphere of ‘ultimate’ evaluations. (Weber 1949, 38)

Likewise, we can argue here, education in its contribution to social progress or educational progress as such is conceivable and consequently measurable only with respect to its instrumental dimension (e.g., skills formation, knowledge accumulation, increase of formal qualifications, association between qualifications and access to labour markets or wages, etc.). There can be no progress, and therefore no measurement, if by education we mean cultivation of the inner self, individual and collective autonomy, freedom of spirit, the search for and creation of personal meaning; in other words, if we mean *paideia*.

However, because education is conceived as an instrument of economic survival and competitiveness, it is measured intensively along with various other aspects of social life. Entire domains of social and, by extension, personal life are being quantified, monitored and evaluated by the institutions of globalisation, seeking to standardise societies across the world, under the idea of progress, closely related with success on global markets. It is at this point that Dale’s (2000) theoretical discussion on globalisation and education policy becomes relevant. The work of the ‘Stanford group’ in comparative sociology (see Meyer et al. 1992), named by Dale as the ‘Common World Educational Culture’ (CWEC) thesis, would argue that this process of standardisation dates back to the creation of the nation state, and the education system, in Europe. Universalistic patterns have created homogenising cultural effects in societies and, by extension, educational structures and curricular contents have been institutionalised in a largely similar way – a process culminating in globalisation. For Dale (2000), globalisation, and consequently the emergence of ‘Globally Structured Educational Agenda’ (GSEA), results from a set of political–economic arrangements aiming at organising the global economy, rather than value patterns. In other words, it is capitalism driven by the search for profit which acts as the causal force according to GSEA, rather than a set of universal values. According to Dale’s critique, the CWEC approach with its emphasis on universal cultural/value patterns does not allow for reflecting on the politics of education and for specifying their effects on education systems, policies and practices. Dale also questions the stress put by the CWEC approach on the authority of science as a legitimation of the ideologies and values disseminated, particularly through international organisations. He argues instead that today governance has become the key target of IOs; the influence of scientists and professionals has been in decline.

There is no space here to move further into this debate, but a couple of points need to be made in closing the present analysis. Capitalism, it must be noted, is part of the western ‘cultural patterns’ spread across the world, as it does not consist merely of profit-seeking strategies but conveys a set of values which transforms cultures and thus
allows for such strategies to appear plausible. The identification of personal merit with economic success, productivity, consumerism, competition, salesmanship, deception and egocentrism are examples of capitalist values, beliefs and modes of behaviour capable of penetrating all spheres of social life. In his classic writings, Weber (1947) underlined the ‘economic rationality’ of capitalism and in contemporary writings on globalisation, Sklair (2001), for instance, remarks on the expansion of the ‘culture-ideology’ of consumerism and Beder (2006) notes the growing corporate manipulation of community values. In Castoriadis’s terms, capitalist values are inseparable from the imaginary signification of progress that emerged in the aftermath of the Enlightenment. Similarly, today, under the conditions of neoliberal globalisation, capitalist criteria and values are incorporated into what is defined and what is measured as progress of societies and they are expressed in education policies across the world through the reform agendas of transnational institutions. For example, the World Bank’s ranking of ‘knowledge-based economies’, which, as Robertson (2008) points out, facilitates the business-making of major economies in ‘developing’ nations, is based on the assumption that a ‘knowledge economy’ is considered something good. The author asks, rhetorically, ‘Who can be against knowledge for development?’ (19), to indicate precisely this issue: the reliance of policy-making on a practically unquestionable imaginary signification.

From the perspective of our analysis, the apparent lack of connection by CWEC between the emphasis on value patterns and education policy, as it is remarked by Dale (2000), is due to the fact that there is no theoretical elaboration of the relation between power and value patterns in education policy studies. Political power entails consensus creation around a set of social values or, at a deeper level, around a set of imaginary significations. Transnational educational policy today gains legitimation, on the one hand, by the dominance of ‘evidence-based’ policy-making of IOs; in this respect, the role of scientific–professional expertise is not reduced by the institutions of global governance, but, on the contrary, is celebrated as a valid and neutral mode of decision-making worldwide. On the other hand, legitimation comes from the widespread belief that societies should be heading towards increasing endlessly their techno–scientific potential and their production/consumption capacity. Both this belief and the acceptance of expert-driven policy-making as authoritative and valid lie at the root of the imaginary signification of progress as accumulation of knowledge, wealth and power, created in the West and diffused all over the world.

Conclusion

The promotion of a common set of reforms worldwide, aiming to serve economic competitiveness, testifies not only to the transnationalisation of education policy but also to the superseding of education politics as a public activity of citizens who question, reflect and deliberate on the purpose, the contents and the pedagogic modes of learning. In the absence of such activity, power is moving away from the public sphere. However, power is no longer exercised exclusively by national policy-making institutions. Major education policies are now made through the bureaucratic and fame-shaming processes of transnational institutions which are recognised as legitimate and knowledgeable policy mechanisms. They produce policies, which, in spite of national–local modes of adoption, push education systems largely towards the same direction. The main goal is that both national education systems and the societies in
which they are rooted function as providers of the cognitive and human resources required by global markets.

Power then in education policy today lies in a transnational space of de-territorialised economic and political rule. It is in this space that the ‘global speak’ on education reform is produced and circulated – a discourse which conveys the dominant imaginary signification of our time. It is a notion of social progress identified today, more than ever before, with economic competitiveness, and seeking to standardise most domains of social life, including education policy.

This is why education politics is practically being eliminated, even in societies in which it was first born (i.e., Europe). For politics to exist, as it was pointed out in this paper, there should be a distinction between expertise and political opinion, so that decisions and the authorities which take them (‘explicit power’) are subject to questioning. But on a deeper level of analysis, for politics to exist, societies should be able to set into question the very imaginary significations (the fundamental locus of power) incarnated in their institutions, projects and policies. Yet, both questioning and political opinion are displaced by the widespread legitimacy of ‘evidence-based’ policymaking institutions, but also more importantly by the global adherence to a linear and competitive notion of social progress.

Notes
1. By ‘transnational institutions’ we mean in this paper the major governmental International Organisations (IOs) and the European Union (EU), which is of course not an IO but a unique political and economic inter-state entity.
2. See the whole document in EU – Czech Presidency (2009). The document is the outcome of an ‘Informal Meeting’ of the EU Ministers of Education held in Prague in March 2009. The Ministers of Education agreed on eight ‘key points’ with regard to their education policies: (a) effectively using the existing resources and maintaining or increasing investments into education and training; (b) focusing on skills and key competences supporting people’s employability, flexibility and adaptability; (c) fostering entrepreneurship and promoting creativity and innovation; (d) developing dialogue and cooperation with social partners, particularly with employers and enterprises; (e) strengthening the role of education from the perspective of the knowledge triangle and its connection to research, development and innovation; (f) promoting lifelong learning and supporting further education and retraining; (g) supporting social cohesion, active citizenship and the sense of social responsibility; (h) promoting European cooperation in education and training.
3. This number refers to the membership of The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), one of the institutions constituting the World Bank. The other institutions are: The International Development Association (IDA), (169 Member States); The International Finance Corporation (IFC), (182 Member States); The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), (175 Member States); and The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), (144 Member States). See http://www.worldbank.org/.
4. In their summit in London, in April 2009, the G20 produced a ‘Global plan for recovery and reform’ to deal with the financial crisis. One of the measures taken was to treble the resources available to the IMF, which was also given a prime role in monitoring economic reforms at a global scale. See the meeting’s communiqué (G20, 2009). The G20 is comprised of governments and heads of national banks of 19 countries plus the European Union. The countries are: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the US.
6. See the same webpage of the World Bank, as above.
7. The GATS (the so-called Doha Round) has been suspended since 2006. See Moutsios (2009).

8. It was not long ago that the above leading institutions and individual governments decided to state this priority explicitly and at the most formal level. At the summit of the G8 (i.e., Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the US) in 2006, which took place in Moscow, an education policy statement was announced, named the 'Moscow Declaration'. The Declaration was signed by the G8 Ministers of Education, and by representatives from the EU, the OECD, the World Bank, UNESCO, China, India, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Mexico and South Africa. The Declaration does not omit to state its interest in ‘human development’, ‘civic engagement’, ‘social cohesion’, and development of ‘social and intercultural skills’, but the emphasis is clearly on the following: education should contribute to economic growth and market productivity; there should be more investments in research, innovation and skills development; the private sector should have access to education systems; educational institutions should be managed with systems of accountability; high standards should be pursued in mathematics, science, technology, foreign languages and ICT; emphasis should be given on vocational training; lifelong learning should aim at skills updating and be linked with enterprise training and the labour market; higher education should adjust to the needs of labour markets; there should be international cooperation on quality assurance and accreditation; cross-border mobility and immigration policies should be based on the formal recognition of skills and educational qualifications (G8 2006). These are clearly policy proposals which educators and, in general, citizens in many countries see introduced, along with other related proposals, in education reforms – on the argument that the education system would, thereby, become more productive and the economy more competitive.

9. See Castoriadis’ thorough analysis of Plato’s Statesman where he unfolds the rhetorical manner by which the great ancient Greek philosopher presents politics as episteme (Castoriadis 2002).

10. There is currently a debate about whether contemporary managerial bureaucracies are ‘post-bureaucracies’, because they employ some novel forms of organisation (ICT-based, ‘networked’, ‘knowledge-based’, project-oriented, ‘flexible’, etc.). However, a careful examination of the Weberian corpus of analysis about bureaucracy, with which current forms are juxtaposed, does not indicate a departure from the main characteristics of bureaucracy as described by Weber (e.g., hierarchy, impersonality, rationality, technical expertise). Such an examination is made by Höpfl (2006) who notes: ‘it is not surprising that bureaucracy/post-bureaucracy discussions have generally concluded that both bureaucracy and “modernity” continue, albeit not quite as we have known them. Given this point of reference, the advent of “post-bureaucracy” would require either the complete disappearance of hierarchies, which is inconceivable, or the identification of some arrangements as inherently incompatible with bureaucracy, and it is hard to see how this could be shown’ (19).

11. CEDEFOP: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training; ETF: European Training Foundation; CRELL: Centre for Research on Education and Lifelong Learning; EENEE: European Expert Network on the Economics of Education; and NESSE: Network of Experts on Social Sciences in Education.

12. See, for example, the analysis of Murphy (2001). As the author remarks: ‘Increasingly, the model for the “successful” NGO is the corporation – ideally a transnational corporation – and NGOs are ever more marketed and judged against corporate ideas. As part of this trend, a new development “scientism” is strangling us with things like strategic framework analysis and results-based management, precisely the values and methods and techniques that have made the world what it is today’ (80).

13. As Shivji (2007), reports in an insightful analysis of NGO presence in Africa, it is not unusual that an NGO is assigned by a foreign government to promote a certain policy by ‘raising awareness’ amongst a local population, and is funded by a donor agency. NGOs can then be part of a policy-making network consisting of governments, IOs and private funding agencies.


15. See the OECD’s website on ‘Measuring the Progress of Societies’ (http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_40033426_40033828_1_1_1_1,00.html) as well as the material of the following event organised by the OECD on this project, titled ‘3rd OECD World Forum on “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy” – Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving
Globalisation, Societies and Education


16. See the ‘taxonomy for societal progress’ proposed by the OECD in Giovannini et al. (2009).

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